From the President's Desk

by Dave Marr

I hope you all had a relaxing and refreshing Christmas and New Year break and you're now back engaged with the 2015 academic year. Your load forecasts have been used to admit a new cohort of students; your student evaluation reports have highlighted where improvements in teacher delivery can occur; and your data warehousing/BI projects are powering on to provide the depth and breadth of information that your university executives are requiring.

Here at AAIR we're also back to the tasks at hand:

- We've received feedback from the survey of participants for the Annual Forum held in Melbourne last November and we'll be passing these on to the 2015 Local Organising Committee (LOC) chaired by Kathie Rabel and to Victoria Chapman from Leishman Associates. We'll also be providing a summary of those findings in the next Newsletter;

- It looks likely that the 2014 Annual Forum will return a reasonable profit which we'll use to invest in other activities that will support our members. Congratulations to Wendy and the 2014 LOC on a successful outcome.

- Further discussions will be held with Australian Higher Education Evaluation Forum (AHEEF) representatives to develop a future plan for the joint conference;

- The AAIR Committee will be meeting in March to further work through the Strategic Planning process that was commenced in 2014. We plan to take a draft plan to the membership for comment and feedback in the first half of 2015; and

- The 2015 SIG Forum is to be hosted by the University of Southern Queensland, to be held at the Kingfisher Bay Resort on Fraser Island. How good does that sound! Further details are available on the AAIR website and elsewhere in this Newsletter.
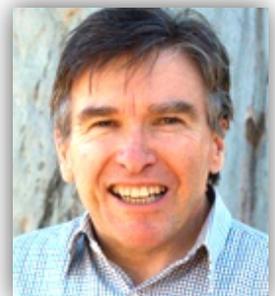
One criticism that was voiced in the feedback survey responses was that the Forum contained a disproportionate number of sessions relating to surveys and evaluation. And if you look at the program you may well agree that that was the case. However, very few abstracts (if any) were rejected and thus the program simply reflected those topics that people submitted. And in 2014 the majority were focussed on surveys and evaluation.

The inclusion of AHEEF possibly added to this bias of session topics. But I feel that whatever's your bent in IR, running surveys and evaluating their results are key tools and perhaps the Forum is now reflecting this. It should also be said that the SIG Forum attracts the data warehousing, BI and load management specialists who may have attended the annual forum in greater numbers than in the past.

I'm sure topics will surge and wane according to the trends in higher education at the time whether policy driven or in response to changes in technology. One thing's for sure, AAIR Forums will continue to reflect what's important to you, so your feedback is essential in helping us provide the types of events that benefit you the most.

Dave Marr, President

2015 AAIR Data Warehouse, Business Intelligence and Load Management Special Interest Group

Hosted by University of Southern Queensland
19-21 August 2015

The 2015 AAIR Special Interest Group (SIG) Forum for Data Warehouse, Business Intelligence and Load Management will be hosted by the University of Southern Queensland and held at the Kingfisher Bay Resort on Fraser Island.

The theme of this year's forum is "Expand your Horizons" and will focus on Data Warehousing, Business Intelligence, and Load Management.

Registration and Accommodation

Registrations and accommodation bookings are now open.

Call for Abstracts

Abstract proposals have also been called and organisers invite members to consider making a presentation in one of the streamed breakout sessions which will offer the opportunity for short presentations (15-20 minutes) and long presentations (30 minutes) with time for discussion afterwards.

If you would like to present, please send an abstract of no more than 250 words to Togamau Te'o at AAIR-SIG@usq.edu.au. Acceptance of abstracts will be confirmed by the end of May 2015.

The program outline is now available.

Website: http://www.usq.edu.au/aair-sig
Twitter: https://twitter.com/AAIRaustralasia #aairsigforum
Venue: Kingfisher Bay Resort, Fraser Island

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Higher Education@home

by Louise Hargreaves

1. Australia's international enrolment recovery is real. Australia reversed a three-year enrolment decline in 2013, registering a modest increase of 2.6% in total international student numbers and a much more noticeable bounce (9.3%) in student commencements. early Australian Education International (AEI) data for 2014 that indicated that this growth was continuing in the first half of the year. And now the latest data, year-to-date (YTD) November 2014 clearly establishes that the turnaround that began in 2013 has strengthened and extended through 2014.

2. Should there be a GST on higher education? As public sector financial woes get worse, we are hearing more calls to put a GST on education. Andrew Norton is not convinced this is a good idea. Some of his concerns are specific to higher education; others apply to education more broadly. Overall, a GST on higher education would be likely to distort the higher education market while raising little revenue in the short to medium term.

3. The Grattan Institute has released an updated report Mapping Australian Higher Education, 2014-15. This report is the third in an annual Grattan series that puts key facts and analysis about the higher education sector in one place.

4. Open economies top Global Talent Competitiveness Index. For the second time in a row high income countries Switzerland and Singapore have claimed the top two places in the annual Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI), compiled by international business school INSEAD. While little has changed among the top 10, six are Europe-based as opposed to eight last year, as Canada and **Australia creep into the top 10** for the first time.

5. Chief Commissioner and Commissioner appointed to TEQSA. On the 2nd of February, the Minister for Education and Training Christopher Pyne MP, announced the appointment of Professor Nicholas Saunders AO as ongoing part-time Chief Commissioner of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and Ms Linley Martin as an additional part-time Commissioner.

6. Student visa fraud in Australia up sharply since 2012. Australia has seen a dramatic increase in the number of international student visas cancelled or under review over the last three years. Observers have described a pattern whereby suspect students and agents have sought to exploit loopholes in the Australian system for streamlined visa processing.

7. Changes in International Students from 2003 to 2013 – Go8 Policy Note. This report examines the changes in international students over the last decade. The data are derived from the Australian Government's PRISMS database comprising year-to-date enrolments and commencements for all international students studying in Australia at all levels who are on student visas.

8. Adelaide loses University College London branch. THE Adelaide branch of the esteemed University College London will close within three years, despite deals worth $20 million still to conclude. The campus opened in 2010 as part of a wider strategy to attract international institutions and create a university city.

9. CQU to expand with Cairns campus. Cairns is to become a two-university with the announcement that Central Queensland University will open a full campus in the CBD. The campus is anticipated to have 2500 students within five years, including 500 international students. Vice-chancellor Scott Bowman said it was the logical next step given the popularity of a study centre the university established a couple years ago.

Higher Education Reform

Higher education reform has dominated the press this year. The following articles provide a very small selection of the coverage on the reform issues.

10. The Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment (HERRA) Bill 2014 – update.

On 12 February 2015 the Senate referred to the Education and Employment Legislation Committee an inquiry into the provisions of the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 (the Bill). The Bill seeks to amend the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA), the Australian Research Council Act 2001 (ARC Act) and related legislation to give authority to a variety of higher education measures emerging out of the 2014–15 Budget and subsequent policy decisions. The Committee will report on the 17th of March.

On 11 February 2015, the Senate referred the inquiry into the principles of the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014, and related matters to the Education and Employment References Committee for inquiry and report. The Committee will report on the 17th of March.

11. ABC fact check: did Labor cut $6.6 billion from higher education? **The claim:** Christopher Pyne says Labor stripped $6.6 billion from higher education funding. **The verdict:** Of the $6.6 billion in Mr Pyne's table, at least $2.3 billion relates to measures that have not been implemented. Almost two thirds relates to funding for students, not universities and the $6.6 billion also takes into account forward estimates for the years to 2016-17, which does not fall into "the course of [Labor's] government". Mr Pyne is incorrect.

12. Andrew Norton's commentary on the [linking of domestic and international fees under the Pyne Package](#) indicates that it is about subsidies more than fees.

13. [United front on university fees at risk of fracturing](#). Support for full deregulation of university fees under the reforms seems to be fracturing with the head of Victoria University calling on the Abbott government to impose some price constraints on fees if it hopes to win Senate approval for its higher education bill

14. Peter Dawkins, Vice Chancellor at Victoria University, wrote an article in The Conversation proposing [an alternative to full unfettered deregulation or a return to a highly regulated system](#). Dawkin's suggests a sensible "third way" that combines managed deregulation with a stronger equity package and oversight.

15. [Higher-education legislation knockback will kill 'crucial' programs](#). Research programs supporting 30,000 scientists and employing 1500 staff will be axed if the government's higher-education reforms fail in the Senate, prompting an 11th-hour appeal from the tertiary sector for crossbench support.
Amid growing resignation from the university sector that a hostile Senate will kill off the government's proposed higher-education reform bill, tertiary institutions will urge the crossbench to consider the consequences of defeat.

16. [Building a sustainable funding model for higher education in Australia – a way forward.](#) In the latest Mitchell Institute discussion paper, Mitchell Professorial Fellow Peter Noonan seeks to contribute to the development of a long term, sustainable and predictable funding model for higher education. He does this by: assessing the benefits and risks of the proposed higher education changes, drawing on previous higher education reform processes and proposals; examining the process undertaken by the Government to date in the development of its reforms; and proposing the establishment of a new independent higher education funding oversight body

to develop and oversee a sustainable higher education funding system, incorporating variable student fees and public subsidies.

Graduate Outcomes

17. And for those of you who missed it [Gradstats: employment and salary outcomes of recent higher education graduates](#) was released in December by Graduate Careers Australia.

18. [Just graduating from university is no longer enough to get a job](#). Earn a university degree and get a job. This formula has worked with relative success for over 50 years. But increasingly in many fields today the formula is no longer working. With nearly twice as many full-time students (approximately 1.2 million) enrolled in university study as there were in 1996, competition for jobs is at an all-time high.

Tips and Tricks

19. [ARC and NHMRC Grant Proposals – Top Ten Tips from the Top](#). The current success rate for ARC grants is 18% and projections are that this rate will be even lower for future rounds. With ever increasing numbers of researchers applying for funding in all of the ARC and NHMRC schemes, this means your application needs to be as competitive as it can be.

20. Have you ever run into a situation in which VLOOKUP and HLOOKUP just did not cut it? [Lookup in Excel using multiple criteria](#) techtip from our American colleagues just might help.

Positions Vacant

Seeking another opportunity in Institutional Research? Try our **Opportunities** webpage for current vacancies in the profession.

Looking for some training and development?

See our **Training and Development** webpage focused on training for institutional researchers.

Looking for higher education conferences and events?

Here is a selection of upcoming events that may be of interest. See our **Events/Fora** webpage for more national and international events.

Registration is now open for the 2015 AIR Forum, May 26-29, in Denver, Colorado. AIR's annual conference, the Forum, presents a unique opportunity to learn about recent research initiatives, practical solutions to common institutional research challenges, and to preview the latest products and services from the field's leading innovators. The Forum provides the opportunity to stay current on the latest institutional research strategies and learn how to apply time-tested best practices.

European Higher Education Society (EAIR) 37th Annual Forum
30 August to 2 September, 2015
Danube University of Krems, Austria
Theme: *From Here to There: Positioning Higher Education Institutions*
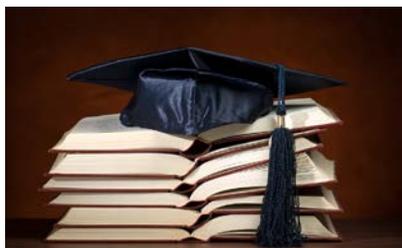Deadline for submissions Monday 9 February 2015 (23:59hrs. CET)
http://www.eairweb.org/forum2015/

Australian International Education Conference (AEIC)
6-9 October, 2015
Theme: International education: global, responsible, sustainable
Call for proposals end 2 March, 2015

Enjoy Reading?

Here are a few recent and upcoming releases:

Universities and Innovation Economies: The Creative Wasteland of Post-Industrial Society by Peter Murphy, James Cook University, examines the rise and fall of the mass university and post-industrial society, considering how we might revitalize economic and intellectual creativity. Looking to a much more inventive social and economic paradigm to drive long-term growth, the author argues for a smaller, leaner, more effective university model - one capable of delivering a greater degree of high-level discovery and creative power.

American higher education today looks nothing like it did a few generations ago let alone at the founding of the country. A new book, The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II (Princeton University Press), explores how colleges evolved. The author is Roger L. Geiger, is a distinguished professor of higher education at Pennsylvania State University.

The Locus of Authority: The Evolution of Faculty Roles in the Governance of Higher Education, a new book by William G. Bowen and Eugene M. Tobin from Princeton University Press. From neither a wholly faculty nor administration-driven perspective, it seeks to deliver a friendly but urgent message about the importance of shared decision-making to higher education's future.
College Disrupted: The Great Unbundling of Higher Education Hardcover – March 10, 2015. For nearly two decades, pundits have been predicting the demise of higher education in the United States. Colleges and universities will soon find themselves competing for students with universities from around the world. With the advent of massive open online courses ("MOOCS") over the past two years, predictions that higher education will be the next industry to undergo "disruption" have become more frequent and fervent. Currently a university's reputation relies heavily on the "four Rs" in which the most elite schools thrive—rankings, research, real estate, and rah! (i.e. sports). But for the majority of students who are not attending these elite institutions, the "four Rs" offer poor value for the expense of a college education.

A reminder for the March release of Institutional Research and Planning in Higher Education: Global Contexts and Themes edited by Karen L. Webber and Angel J. Calderon, Routledge Taylor and Francis, Group.

Globalization, demographic shifts, increase in student enrollments, rapid technological transformation, and market-driven environments are altering the way higher education operates today. Institutional Research and Planning in Higher Education explores the impact of these changes on decision support and the nature of institutional research in higher education. Bringing together a diverse set of global contributors, this volume covers contemporary thinking on the practices of academic planning and its impact on key issues such as access, institutional accountability, quality assurance, educational policy priorities, and the development of higher education data systems.

New Tricks: Reflections on a Life in Medicine and Tertiary Education (Biography) By Richard Larkins. What is the essence of leadership? Richard Larkins, a major figure of Australian science, medicine, and university administration, provides a rare, candid account of a life lived in the public eye, and of the philosophy he has drawn upon to negotiate the personal and professional challenges this life has thrown up.

Higher Education Abroad

by Louise Hargreaves

1. OECD publishes 2015 Education Policy Outlook. Thirty-four countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or the OECD, are in the process of boosting higher education reforms in order to reduce the proportion of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training. According to a key report, Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making reforms happen, the common objective is to implement 450 education reforms that were adopted between 2008 and 2014 across the OECD countries, and the 29% of policies that aim to improve the quality and equity of tertiary education to prepare students for the future.

2. Research says middle-class aspirations the real driver of demand for higher education. The global gross tertiary enrolment ratio (GTER) – that is, the percentage of the tertiary-aged population actually enrolled in higher education – has more than doubled over the past 20 years, growing from 14% in 1992 to 32% in 2012. This compares to an increase of just 4% in the 20 years before 1992. Much of this growth has been driven by growing participation in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and East Asia.

3. Gates Foundation initiative looks to broaden discussion of college value. An initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is trying to change the public discussion about what can be considered a valued outcome for college graduates. The Post-Collegiate Outcomes Initiative is considering four overlapping categories of graduate outcomes: public, private, economic, and human capital. The idea behind the initiative is to move the college value discussion away from just an earnings and gainful employment calculation.

4. The Credit Hour Is Here to Stay, at Least for Now. The Carnegie Unit has been around for more than a century, and unless someone can come up with a better way of tracking college credit, it won't be going anywhere anytime soon. It presents challenges, but it has value because it sets minimum instructional standards.

That's the conclusion of a report being released on Thursday by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The report, "The Carnegie Unit: A Century-Old Standard in a Changing Education Landscape," examines the role of the Carnegie Unit, more commonly called the credit hour, in an ever-evolving world of education.

5. Competency-Based Degree Programs on The Rise. Competency-based education is in vogue — even though most people have never heard of it, and those who have can't always agree on what it is.

A recently released report from the American Enterprise Institute says a growing number of colleges and universities are offering, or soon will offer, credits in exchange for direct demonstrations of learning. That's a big shift from credit hours — the currency of higher education for more than a century — which require students to spend an allotted amount of time with instructors.

6. Twitter launches Twitter University to build better employees. In February, Twitter announced a new internal learning initiative, Twitter University, to give its employees better skills. And the fast-growing social network bought a company to help make it happen. "Being able to continually learn on the job and develop a sense of expertise or mastery is a fundamental factor in success in the technology industry and long term happiness at a company," Peter Fry, Twitter SVP for Engineering wrote. "Twitter University will be a vital foundation for our engineering organization."

7. Amazon Makes a Push on College Campuses. In its latest effort to win new customers, Amazon.com Inc. is going back to school. Amazon has struck deals with three large universities to operate co-branded websites selling textbooks, fan shirts, ramen noodles and most other items available on Amazon.com. While the deals aren't exclusive, officials at the colleges say the arrangements acknowledge a reality: Their students already shop on Amazon.

8. Three Reasons College Matters for Social Mobility. Americans have been getting better educated in the last half-century, but class gaps in post-secondary educational attainment have widened. There are bigger gaps in terms of who attends college, who completes college, and how students pay for college, as shown in a recent report from the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in High Education.

9. The Rich Man's Dropout Club: Whatever happened to the teenage entrepreneurs whom Peter Thiel paid to forgo college? In the five years since the billionaire investor Peter Thiel announced his eponymous fellowship, the project has assumed outsize social significance. Mr. Thiel's outspoken nature and his view that the value of college is oversold have earned him both enemies and accolades.

10. Standard & Poor's Issues Negative Outlook for Nonprofit Higher Education in the US. Standard & Poor's Rating Services has issued a negative outlook for nonprofit higher education for 2015, citing, among other things, tension between rising costs to colleges and a focus on student affordability. In a recent report, the agency says the ensuing competition among colleges to attract top students will weigh heaviest on "those whose credit characteristics are already on the cusp of a lower rating."

11. College Presidents Get Their Own Guide to Social Media. As social media redefine how we communicate, both new and experienced users in colleges' top jobs have to ponder some questions.

How should I be representing and promoting my college personally on social media? What do I gain if I do it well? What do I lose if I don't? And what are the risks of engaging in a forum where a misstep can go viral and embarrass me and my institution? #Follow the Leader: Lessons in Social Media Success from #higherEd CEOs.

12. Pretty Soon the U.S. Might Run Out of College-Educated Workers. Maybe that college degree will pay off after all. Last month, the unemployment rate of workers who hold a bachelor's degree or higher sank to 2.8 percent, its lowest level since September 2008. That compares with a jobless rate of 5.7 percent for the overall population. That could mean the U.S. isn't far from a position that would have been crazy-talk not too long ago—running out of those types of people to employ.

13. Americans might be losing interest in business school. What were once quiet questions about the value of a master's in business administration have become brazen calls, from venture capitalists and old-school businessmen alike, for young entrepreneurs to skip business school altogether. Now it seems that Americans are less interested in the degree than they used to be.

14. Thousands of students are shunning the UK's traditional universities to take their degrees in further education colleges down the road. The number of undergraduates in further education, or FE, colleges rose 11.8% in the two years up to 2012-13 while traditional universities suffered a drop.

15. HEFCE granted regulatory powers over new providers and universities. England's funding council will be given powers to regulate the entry of new providers and universities to the sector, a move described as "an early job application" for the council to be the chief regulator after the election.

16. A first: Scots university plans fees refund for UK, overseas students who fail. Fee-paying students at a Scottish university will be the first to have their costs waived if they fail to graduate under radical proposals. Hundreds of students at University of the West of

Scotland (UWS) could potentially benefit from the initiative.

17. New Zealand's international enrolment up 12% as number of prospective domestic students falls. New data released last month shows that New Zealand, already a popular study abroad destination, has boosted its international student enrolments by 12% for the period January to August 2014 compared to the same period from 2013. This welcome increase coincides with news that fewer domestic students are achieving the required standard to be accepted into New Zealand universities – requirements that became more rigorous in 2014 as a result of new standards established by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

18. New Chinese Crackdown on Internet Access Draws Academic Critics. University professors in China and Chinese students hoping to study in the United States are among the sharpest critics of recent efforts by Beijing to hamper the widespread use of virtual private networks to bypass the country's tight Internet restrictions.

The professors say the government's new crackdown, which has disrupted VPNs to an unparalleled degree, has made it impossible for them to use Google Scholar, a search tool providing links to a vast archive of scholarly papers.

19. China vows no 'Western values' in universities. China's education minister has vowed to ban university textbooks that promote "Western values", state media said, in the latest sign of ideological tightening under President Xi Jinping. China's universities are run by the ruling Communist party, which tightly controls discussions of history and other topics it construes as a potential threat to its grip on power.

20. Establishment of five new universities in Turkey. While 2.1 million students applied for this year's university entrance exam, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) granted approval for the foundation of five new universities. With these new additions, the number of universities in Turkey will increase to 189.

21. Bologna Process is 'making an impact worldwide' The Bologna Process has made a difference not only within its 47 member countries but also far beyond Europe's borders. Europe's experimentation with cross-border compatibility, cooperation and coherence across its higher education sector is catalysing support and debate on quality assurance in other parts of the world, including Russia, Australia, the United States and Africa.

22. Asia-Pacific universities gaining local appeal. As more universities in the region perform well on global rankings, the education sector is becoming very competitive. A recent MasterCard's survey on Consumer Purchasing Priorities for Education revealed that Close to two-thirds of parents in Asia-Pacific plan to send their children to local universities for higher education.

23. Korean overseas student spending down 14% in 9-year low. According to new research published by the Bank of Korea Spending by South Korean students studying abroad has hit a nine-year low after falling 14% in the last year to US$3.702bn as the number of outbound international students has continued to fall.

24. Nigeria projected to be one of the world's fastest-growing markets for postgraduate studies. At some point in the early part of this decade, Nigeria surpassed Morocco as the leading source of internationally mobile students in Africa. UNESCO tells us that just under 50,000 Nigerian students studied abroad in 2012, and the forecasts agree on this: Nigeria is on pace to be one of the world's most populous countries and its tertiary-age student cohort is growing right along with the overall population

25. NMC Horizon report: 2015 higher education edition. The 2015 Higher Education Edition is a collaborative effort between the NMC and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI). This 12th edition describes annual findings from the NMC Horizon Project, an ongoing research project designed to identify and describe emerging technologies likely to have an impact on learning, teaching, and creative inquiry in education.

The Rising Influence of Institutional Research

26. Take a walk on campus and ask the first five people you encounter for directions to the office of institutional research (IR). Here's betting you get five puzzled looks.

    As a group, these professionals have a deep-seated reputation for doing tough and tedious work, almost always to less fanfare than they deserve. Recent research suggests that veneer of relative anonymity is cracking. One reason is technology. Download the full report Impact of Business Intelligence on Institutional Research.

Online Learning

27. Global review maps the state of MOOCs in 2014. Expectations for MOOCs have been shaped by offsetting waves of enthusiasm and skepticism over the past couple of years. At some point during 2014, however, the market began to arrive at a more balanced understanding of MOOCs as a way to efficiently deliver online courses to a wide field of students.

28. Meet the New, Self-Appointed MOOC Accreditors: Google and Instagram. A big question for MOOCs, the free online courses that hundreds of colleges now offer, is whether employers will take them seriously as credentials. But some of the biggest MOOC producers may have figured out how to jump-start employer buy-in: Get big-name companies to help design them.

29. Harvard Business School takes online basics program worldwide. Harvard Business School on Tuesday announced the global launch of its online business basics (or CORe, Credential of Readiness) program. The program — which lasts two months at a cost of $1,500 — will be open to applicants around the world, including adult learners out of school up to 10 years and admitted MBA students who want a "boot camp experience."

30. Pearson SVP shares 5 key strategies for successful online degree programs. With nontraditional students quickly becoming the new traditional, online degree programs have increased in prominence. As U.S. News & World Report noted in September, their reputation has also risen to that of an alternative, equally prestigious route.

31. Is online education good or bad? And is this really the right question? Re-conceptualizing and converting a traditional classroom course to an online course doesn't necessarily make it better or worse. What does the research tell us? And what are the lessons for teaching – and learning – in the future?

32. Udacity's nanodegrees link students to tech jobs. Udacity, the pioneer online education company that spawned the MOOC (massive open online course) revolution, has moved onto a set of courses it calls "nanodegrees". Founded by Stanford University computer scientist Sebastian Thrun, Udacity has moved away from free online education and is now pushing ahead with short, low-cost computer and data science courses that are designed to rapidly find jobs for their students.

33. The Grand Plan to Give Everyone a Free Year of Online College. This month, Steven Klinsky—a philanthropist and founder of the private equity firm New Mountain Capital, and the non-profit he founded, Modern States Education Alliance, announced the launch of a new initiative called Freshman Year for Free, which aims to make a full range of freshman-level college courses available to anyone for free online. Unlike most so-called massively open online courses or MOOCs, which have sprouted up over the last few years, these courses will directly prepare students for accredited exams like the Advanced Placement test and the College Level Examination Program (or CLEP) exam.

34. Four Evolving Trends that May Shape the Future of Distance Education. As distance education continues to evolve and move from the fringe of higher education to the mainstream there are and will be new challenges for the field. In the past ten years we have seen a dramatic shift in how distance education is positioned within institutions.

Rankings and Benchmarking

35. A new resource for anyone interested in university rankings is available at the International Rankings Experts Group (IREG) site. The Inventory of National Rankings has been prepared by the Perspektywy Education Foundation, Poland, and provides basic data about a variety of national ranking systems. Two of them have been approved by IREG.

36. New ranking exposes curbs on university freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is at the heart of academic life and a university should be a place where every issue is discussed and debated. Not so, according to the findings presented in the first ever Freedom of Speech University Rankings (FSUR). They reveal that 80% of UK higher education institutions routinely regulate and actively restrict students' free speech and expression in some way.

37. Best online programs ranking. U.S. News & World Report's rankings of the best online programs are growing more robust with each iteration, its critics acknowledge, but the publication is exaggerating by calling them the "only resource students can turn to for unbiased information on online programs." The fourth edition of the rankings, which were introduced in 2012, went live in January, the latest attempt by the publication to provide an overview of the rapidly expanding number of institutions that offer distance education programs.

38. A report on EUA members' first experiences on U-Multirank. EUA has published a new report that discusses the experiences and views of EUA members on U-Multirank, a multi-dimensional ranking of higher education institutions produced with seed funding from the European Commission.

    The paper, which is based on a membership survey carried out in autumn 2014, concludes that opinions regarding UMR remain divided among EUA members.

Student Recruitment and Mobility

39. Data-driven international student enrolment strategies. Interest in recruiting international students is growing among many institutions, for reasons ranging from reputational to financial. However, strategies translating intent into action are often devoid of research and insights.

40. International Student Mobility Trends 2015: An Economic Perspective. International students contributed almost $27 billion dollars to the U.S. economy in 2014, which corresponds to a 12 percent increase versus 2013 ($24 billion). The growth has been driven largely by students from upper-middle-income economies and countries with large national scholarship programs, which marks a significant shift from before the 2008 financial crisis. By 2017, the global middle class is projected to increase its spending on educational products and services by nearly 50 percent, from $4.4 trillion in 2012 to $6.2 trillion.

41. From Quick-fix to Sustainable International Student Enrolment Strategies. The recession has fuelled short-termism among higher education institutions in terms of their student enrollment goals. The fiscal challenges, competitive landscape and complex markets, have increased the pressure to on colleges and universities to adopt quick fixes. These short-sighted strategies not only resulted in poor experiences for international students, as well as financial and reputational risks for the institutions involved.

42. The International Mobility of Students in Asia and the Pacific a UNESCO report. Traditionally, the flow of students has been towards English-speaking countries, such as the United Kingdom, United States and Australia. However, this pattern is changing with a sharp increase in the flow and exchange of students in Asia and the Pacific, and the development of several education hubs in the region. According to OECD data, the largest numbers of foreign students in 2011 were from China, India and Korea. In fact, Asian students accounted for 53 percent of all students enrolled in higher education institutions overseas worldwide.

2015 -The Year Ahead

43. Top 10 IT Issues for Higher Education Institutions. Educause presents the top 10 IT issues facing higher education institutions this year. What is new about 2015?

44. 3 emerging technologies reimagining higher ed in 2015 and beyond. From the make-up of student bodies to the way materials are delivered, higher ed is rapidly changing — and largely due to technology. To get an idea of what the future of higher ed might look like in 2015 and beyond, Education Dive examined three emerging technologies that could facilitate some of the space's biggest shifts in years. And the future looks bright, indeed.

45. Seven trends to watch out for in 2015 in international education. For many in the international education industry, January isn't the beginning of a new year but the continuation of the previous, especially for those working to academic cycles. It follows suit that some seeds for business and collaboration in 2015 were sown last year, although developments in the sector will also be dictated by the unpredictable global marketplace.

46. Higher Education Issues 15 for '15 an American Perspective. The arrival of a new year brings with it the opportunity to reflect on that which occurred over the past twelve months and to look ahead at what awaits. For those in the higher education sector in the US, here is a list of issues that will be will likely require time and attention in 2015. Some are new, others carryover from 2014

47. What could happen in China in 2015? It will be another year of frustration for students, both those graduating and those still in school considering their prospects. A substantial proportion of new graduates will not find jobs that require a degree. Indeed, many will find what they learned and how they learned at university has done little to prepare them for the 2015 job market in China.

AAIR Newsletter Issue 2, March

A great way to get involved with the AAIR community is to share your thoughts and ideas. Do you have something you would like to share with your IR colleagues? The next AAIR Newsletter will be published in the last week of March. Please send your contributions to the editor@aair.org.au by Friday March 13.

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